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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (03/20): "WHAT COMES AFTER
DIALOGUE?"

Main Stories:

Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida lead with statements by Israeli military officers and soldiers admitting to killing Palestinian civilians, sometimes for no reason, during the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip. Citing a March 19 report in Israeli daily Haaretz, the papers run excerpts of soldiers' testimonies including the killing of a woman and her children because she turned left instead of right as she was ordered by Hebrew-speaking soldiers. Both Palestinian and Israeli public outrage is captured in the coverage. The news also appearing as an AFP story on Al Ayyam's front page, notes a statement by U.N. Human Rights Rapporteur Richard Falk that recent events in Gaza merit an investigation of war crimes.

Al Ayyam leads with the suspension of internal Palestinian dialogue in Cairo, without a new date for its resumption. In contrast, Al Quds' and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages report that talks will resume next week. The papers note that Egypt's Intelligence Chief Sulayman was told by U.S. officials in Washington that any Palestinian Authority government must accept Quartet conditions in order to be recognized internationally. Al Quds quotes State Department Spokesman Wood confirming on March 19 that Sulayman discussed regional issues including Gaza with Secretary Clinton.

Al Quds' front page reports that Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas held separate meetings in Ramallah with U.S. Consul General Jacob Walles, a delegation of business leaders, the PA Central Elections Committee and a Fatah delegation to brief them on the status of "Palestinian national dialogue" in Cairo. In a second front page report, the paper quotes Abbas' spokesman Nabil Abu Rudaynah calling Israeli demolition orders of Palestinian houses in Jerusalem, ethnic cleansing and an "unprecedented escalation" of

demolitions by the Jerusalem municipality.

Al Quds' front page reports on a meeting between chief PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat and NSC Chief General Jones in Washington on March 19. In the meeting, Jones reiterated U.S. commitment to promoting stability in the Middle East and the two-state solution and emphasized the need for all parties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to respect previous commitments.

All front pages reports on the Israeli arrests of 19 Palestinians in the West Bank on March 19, including Hamas legislators and leaders. The arrests include "Deputy Premier" Nasser Eddin Al Sha'air of Hamas. The papers report that the Palestinian Authority cabinet and Presidency condemned the Israeli "arrest campaign."

Al Ayyam's front page reports on an internal Islamic Brotherhood memorandum criticizing the behavior of Hamas during the recent Gaza conflict. The memo refers to the killing, kidnapping and torturing of Palestinians under several pretexts, including accusations of collaborating with Israel.-----

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Samih Shbib opines in independent daily Al Ayyam under the title, "What comes after dialogue?!!"(03/20): "The coming days, in terms of Hamas and Palestinian Authority behavior, will begin to outline the path for the near future. We hope that the upcoming Arab summits will play a positive role in returning parties to the national dialogue track and national agreement, since the alternative will mean great destruction, on top of the destruction

JERUSALEM 00000498 002 OF 002

in Gaza and [destruction] of politics and the whole national existence."

2) Omar Al Ghul comments in Al Hayat Al Jadida on the name of the new Palestinian Authority (PA) government and statements by Hamas leader Zahhar refusing to accept PA Premier Fayyad as a candidate for Premier even in exchange for having the sun in Hamas' hands. The editorial is titled, "Is the problem in the name?"(03/20): "Once again, the problem isn't in the name but in the content. Either a technocrat government is formed that responds to the interests of the Palestinian people and meets international requirements or the situation will remain unchanged because the world won't beg (for compliance to international norms] but will simply impose [its requirements]... any leader who believes that holding the sun in his left [hand] would do him any good is mistaken."

WALLES